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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LUANDA 000031

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [KWMN](#) [AO](#)
SUBJECT: ANGOLA: POLL SHOWS SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT AND
ELECTIONS

REF: 06 LUANDA 1298

Classified By: Ambassador Cynthia Efird for reasons 1.4 (b)(d).

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Angolans support the government's economic performance and plan to participate in elections, according to a recent International Republican Institute (IRI) poll. Poll results indicate a clear electoral advantage and public support for the ruling MPLA party, but also show possible areas of weakness on which opposition parties could develop campaign strategies. Opposition parties focused on results that seemed to fly in the face of popular perceptions, refusing to accept the validity of key data indicating weak support. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) IRI, in conjunction with the Angolan polling firm Consulform, surveyed 3,678 citizens in 12 provinces from 29 June - 06 September 2006. Polling was conducted by personal interviews in Portuguese and key native languages. Topics included economic well-being, government performance, elections, and political parties. Fifty percent of respondents were between ages 18-29 and were not of voting age in the 1992 elections. Twenty-nine percent of respondents were employed by the government. Sixty percent described themselves as comfortable or upper middle class and 19 percent completed high school; both statistics are well above the national average. Complete survey results are available at

<http://www.iri.org/africa/angola/pdfs/2006-12-06-Angolan-Poll.ppt>.

ECONOMIC GROWTH GETS APPROVAL BUT ANGOLANS WANT TO VOTE

¶3. (U) According to poll results, 73 percent of respondents believe that the country's economic development is going well and that their lives are going to improve. Fifty-nine percent indicate that their personal economic situation is "the same" or "more or less the same" since 2002. Sixty-four percent rate either unemployment or poverty as the major problem facing the country, yet 91 percent of respondents stated that the government has done an excellent or good job in addressing these problems. While 34 percent expect quick resolution to economic problems, 64 percent believe problems will only be resolved in the long term. Fifty-four percent feel that immigration trends are bad or very bad.

¶4. (U) The poll showed that Angolans are upbeat about future elections. While 79 percent plan to vote and 58 percent believe elections will be very important for the country's future, only 23 percent believe elections could improve socio-economic conditions. Eighty-five percent believe that some level of democracy exists in the country and 90 percent think elections will be free and fair, but 53 percent of those respondents believe there will still be "some" or "major" problems with elections. Forty-five percent say they are not members or sympathizers of any political party. Of the 12 percent who say they do not plan to vote, 55 percent

report that "no party has convinced them" or that "no party has a concrete or good program," 22 percent are afraid of what could happen after elections, and four percent believe that elections won't change anything. Only three percent of all respondents fear that the elections may lead to violence.

NOTE: The majority of polling was completed before the voter registration campaign was announced on August 30, 2006. END NOTE.

CONTRADICTORY RESULTS CREATE CONTROVERSY

15. (SBU) The electorate has some very strong opinions that reflect opposition to current law or policy. An overwhelming 79 percent believe that provincial citizens should elect their own governor, rather than the current practice of nomination by the President. Sixty percent want concurrent presidential and legislative elections, which flies in the face of the recent Conselho da Republica recommendation to hold separate elections (see reftel).

16. (C) Poll results listed the Police as the most trusted institution to resolve problems of the population. This contradiction of popular perception and the 2004 IRI poll, where police were the least-trusted institution, led to questions on poll methodology. The response might be understandable if security had been polled as a pressing concern, but only three percent noted crime or violence as a major problem. Opposition parties seized this and other specific results in order to question the poll's overall validity. While conceding that the poll did contain valuable information, UNITA spokesperson Adalberto Costa Junior specifically cited this data in questioning the validity of

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poll results and the impartiality of respondents in a conversation with P/E chief.

OPPOSITION PARTIES FACE UPHILL BATTLE

17. (C) In data not publicly released, an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they would vote for the MPLA in legislative elections. IRI reported that UNITA and other major opposition parties did not directly challenge them on poll results, but did encourage them to do additional polling. In a private meeting with IRI, UNITA President Isaias Samakuva "didn't bat an eye" when told of his party's poor showing. Adalberto Costa Jr. also told P/E chief that UNITA has been doing its own polling, with dramatically different results. IRI's meeting with nine small opposition parties was far more contentious, with some attendees openly questioning the poll's validity and methodology. The MPLA did not reply to IRI's request for a meeting, but was given a copy of the presentation.

18. (SBU) Opposition parties are clearly facing a challenge. Forty-eight percent of respondents indicate their preference for incumbents over challengers. Fifty-seven percent receive election information from the media and a majority of respondents listed TV and radio as their primary news sources. Only 12 percent claim to get information from their party. Given the lack of independent Angolan TV stations and the monopoly of government radio outside the capital, the opposition will be challenged to spread its election message outside of Luanda. Creating platforms around key issues such as unemployment and poverty and engaging the 56 percent who claim to have little to no interest in politics, people without party affiliation, and those who say that no party has convinced them to vote may become campaign strategies for opposition parties. Of note, 51 percent of respondents said they would vote for a female candidate, though few parties have high level female representation.

LOST IN THE SHUFFLE

¶9. (C) COMMENT: The release of the poll during the MPLA's 50th anniversary congress and immediately prior to end of year festivities doomed it to little or no media coverage. Moreover, the press conference called to launch the poll results was organized at the last minute and featured representatives from opposition parties, but not the MPLA. Tensions between IRI and Consulform over the interpretation of poll results resulted in Consulform's absence from the press conference, which was noted and questioned by participants. The press conference was ill-served by the poor translation of the speaker's remarks and audience questions. Spinning out of the control of IRI organizers, attention focused on specific questions such as support for the police, rather than key issues such as strong voter support for elections.

¶10. (C) Opposition parties have understandably tried to shift attention away from evidence of their weak showing, possibly in hopes of discrediting the poll rather than shouldering the burden of adopting new campaign strategies and techniques and facing the fact that they have a long road ahead of them. Even the MPLA, clearly favored by the results, has resisted touting the poll as a result of the controversy. IRI is now reassessing its roll-out strategy of the poll at the provincial level to avoid similar problems. END COMMENT
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